UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.6/1997/7
26 February 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Forty-first session
10-21 March 1997
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*

FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: REVIEW OF MAINSTREAMING IN ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat

Report of the Secretary-General

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* E/CN.6/1997/1.

97-05258 (E) 050397

ABBREVIATIONS

DAM	Department of Administration and Management
DDSMS	Department for Development Support and Management Services
DESIPA	Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis
DHA	Department of Humanitarian Affairs
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DPCSD	Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development
DPI	Department of Public Information
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DPKO/FALD	Field Administration and Logistics Division
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
IDCP	United Nations International Drug Control Programme
INTORG	Interorganization bodies such as JIU, ISCC, CCAQ and ICC
OCSS	Office of Conference and Support Services
OHRM	Office of Human Resources Management
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
OLA	Office of Legal Affairs
OPPBA	Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts
REGCOM	Regional Commissions
SG	Executive Office of the Secretary-General
UNCC	United Nations Compensation Commission
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNJSPF	United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund
UNOG	United Nations Office at Geneva
UNON	United Nations Office at Nairobi
UNOV	United Nations Office at Vienna
UNSCOM	United Nations Special Commission

INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 51/67 of 12 December 1996, the General Assembly requested that an update on the status of women in the Secretariat be submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-first session.

2. By the same resolution, the General Assembly welcomed the achievement of the goal of a 35 per cent overall participation rate of women in posts subject to geographical distribution, as called for in its resolution 45/125 of 14 December 1990. It reaffirmed the goal of 50/50 gender distribution by the year 2000 and expressed concern that the goal might not be met, especially at policy-making and decision-making levels. The General Assembly called upon the Secretary-General to ensure full and urgent implementation of the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000)[1] in order to achieve overall gender equality, particularly at the Professional level and above, by the year 2000. Further, it requested the Secretary-General to continue his work to create a gender-sensitive work environment and to enable the Focal Point for Women in the Secretariat effectively to monitor and facilitate progress in the implementation of the strategic plan. It also urged the Secretary-General to increase the number of women employed in the Secretariat from developing countries and from countries that have a low representation of women.

3. The Secretary-General, since assuming office on 1 January 1997, has clearly stated his commitment to the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all policies and programmes of the United Nations system. The achievement of the goals set for gender distribution and the creation of a gender-sensitive work environment in the Secretariat form an integral part of this commitment. The accountability of senior managers in this regard will be pursued vigorously.

4. As his first step towards fulfilling this commitment, the Secretary-General has appointed, as part of his Cabinet, a Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, at the level of Assistant Secretary-General. In this capacity, the Special Adviser reports directly to the Secretary-General and assists him, in particular, in ensuring the system-wide coordination of policy for implementing the Beijing Platform for Action,[2] and for mainstreaming a gender perspective in all activities of the United Nations system. The Special Adviser has been designated Chairperson of the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality. The Focal Point for Women in the Secretariat, which is currently located in the Office of Human Resources Management, will be transferred with the current resources to the Office of the Special Adviser and will function as part of that Office. Efforts will continue to strengthen the function, in line with General Assembly resolution 51/67. The Special Adviser continues to head the Division for the Advancement of Women.

5. Because of the short interval between the end of the regular session of the General Assembly and the opening of the Commission on the Status of Women, the present report focuses on relevant developments in statistical data and changes in the June 1996 figures cited in the report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat, submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session (A/51/304). The present report should be

read in conjunction with the earlier report, which is before the Commission for information.

I. STATISTICAL UPDATE

6. In table 1 of his report to the Assembly at its fifty-first session (A/51/304), the Secretary-General indicated the level of representation of women by department or office in the global Secretariat. Tables 1 and 2 below update those data as of 31 December 1996. The General Assembly's mandated goal of achieving 35 per cent representation of women by the year 1995 has finally been achieved in 17 offices and departments out of 33. In fact, in five departments and offices the goal of 50/50 overall has been achieved. The overall level of representation within the global Secretariat rose by 0.9 per cent, to reach 35.5 per cent at the end of 1996 (see table 1). However, the matching goal of 25 per cent women in posts at the decision-making level has not been reached. As of 31 December 1996, 18.5 per cent of posts at the D-1 level and above were encumbered by women, an increase of 1.6 per cent in women's representation since last year. Ten departments and offices have, in fact, achieved 25 per cent women in senior-level positions (see table 2).

7. It should be noted that the tables do not reflect the appointment by the Secretary-General, on 27 January, of two women at the level of Assistant Secretary-General - on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, and for External Relations, respectively. Although the goal of 25 per cent representation of women at this level remains far from being achieved, these new appointments bring the number of women in high-level posts to three.

8. The year 1996 proved to be very difficult for improving the status of women in the United Nations Secretariat due to the recruitment freeze, ongoing restructuring, retrenchment and early separation programmes. In spite of this, the percentage of women in posts subject to geographical distribution made the slight gain mentioned above. The statistics in table 3 below attest to the efforts the Organization has undertaken to reach the General Assembly mandates on gender goals. Table 4 indicates the number of senior decision-making staff promoted and recruited during 1996.

9. The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) and the Focal Point for Women in the Secretariat have continued to be vigilant in ensuring that the opportunities to improve the representation of women in the global Secretariat are not diminished and that the gains achieved in the past few years are not lost during the time of retrenchment. OHRM, in cooperation with the appointment and promotion bodies, and the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat, continue to make every effort to ensure that women are not disproportionately affected at a time when the Organization is undergoing major changes.

Table 1. Gender distribution of staff in the United Nations Secretariat by department or office and by grade: Professional and higher-level staff in posts subject to geographical distribution, as of 31 December 1996

Department/ office	USG		ASG		D-2		D-1		P-5		P-4		P-3		P-2		P-1		Total		Grand total	% of women
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
UNSCOM										1									0	1	1	100.0
DAM	1						2	2	5	5	2	5	2	3	2	2			14	17	31	54.8
OHRM			1		1	2	1	3	6	8	9	10	10	10	6	6			34	39	73	53.4
DPCSD	1				4	2	9	2	14	9	10	17	5	10	3	7			46	47	93	50.5
UNJSPF							2	1	6	2	2	6	6	6		1			16	16	32	50.0
INTORG									2	1	1	1				1			3	3	6	50.0
DPI			1		4	2	12	5	18	14	32	30	37	43	26	30			130	124	254	48.8
OPPBA			1		4		5		8	9	9	7	10	16	8	6			45	38	83	45.8
DDSMS	1				1	1	3	1	12	6	17	13	9	10		3			43	34	77	44.2
UNHCR	1		1				2		6	2	12	7	13	11	6	8			41	28	69	40.6
UNOG	1				2		7	1	4	7	10	4	18	12	11	12			53	36	89	40.4
IDCP	1				2		1		7	1	7	8	7	4	3	6			28	19	47	40.4
UNEP		1			1	2	2			1	5	1	1		2	2			11	7	18	38.9
DPA	1		2		7	1	9	5	21	12	22	15	13	11	6	7			81	51	132	38.6
SG	2		1	1	4		1	2	3	3	2	1	1	1	2	2			16	10	26	38.5
OLA	1				3		7		10	8	10	7	9	6	10	8			50	29	79	36.7
DPKO			1		3		8	1	5	2	16	8	10	13	4	3			47	27	74	36.5
OIOS	1				1		3	1	7	1	10	9	9	2	1	5			32	18	50	36.0
REGCOM								1	1		1								2	1	3	33.3
ESCWA	1					1	6		13	2	20	4	7	8	4	10			51	25	76	32.9
OCSS			1		3	1	12	4	14	6	21	11	26	15	12	6			89	43	132	32.6
DESIPA	1				2		10	2	11	11	23	9	22	7	11	8			80	37	117	31.6
ESCAP	1						9	2	19	2	31	12	22	9	11	14			93	39	132	29.5
DHA	1				5		5		10	3	6	3	2	3	3	4			32	13	45	28.9
ECLAC	1						10	3	14	5	35	9	23	13	14	9			97	39	136	28.7
UNON									1	1	3	1	4		3	2			11	4	15	26.7

Department/ office	USG		ASG		D-2		D-1		P-5		P-4		P-3		P-2		P-1		Total		Grand total	% of women
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
UNOV					2		3	2	7	2	11	4	13	4	3	2			39	14	53	26.4
DPKO/FALD			3		2		7		12	4	13	5	5	5	3	2			45	16	61	26.2
UNCHS			1		1		2	1	4	1	9	2	7	4	2	1			26	9	35	25.7
UNCTAD	1				3	1	21	1	38	6	36	8	40	22	18	10	1		158	48	206	23.3
ECE	1					1	5	2	15	1	18	6	18	6	11	4			68	20	88	22.7
ECA	1						6	1	30	3	36	7	36	13	12	9			121	33	154	21.4
UNCC					2		1		1		1								5	0	5	0.0
Total	19	1	13	1	57	14	171	43	324	139	440	230	385	267	197	190	1		1 607	885	2 492	35.5

Table 2. Gender distribution of staff in the United Nations Secretariat by department or office and by grade: D-1 and higher-level staff in posts subject to geographical distribution, as of 31 December 1996

Department/ office	USG		ASG		D-2		D-1		Total		Grand total	% of women
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
REGCOM								1	0	1	1	100.0
OHRM			1		1	2	1	3	3	5	8	62.5
UNEP		1			1	2	2		3	3	6	50.0
DAM	1						2	2	3	2	5	40.0
ECE	1					1	5	2	6	3	9	33.3
UNJSPF							2	1	2	1	3	33.3
DPI			1		4	2	12	5	17	7	24	29.2
DDSMS	1				1	1	3	1	5	2	7	28.6
UNOV					2		3	2	5	2	7	28.6
SG	2		1	1	4		1	2	8	3	11	27.3
DPA	1		2		7	1	9	5	19	6	25	24.0
OCSS			1		3	1	12	4	16	5	21	23.8
DPCSD	1				4	2	9	2	14	4	18	22.2
ECLAC	1						10	3	11	3	14	21.4
UNCHS			1		1		2	1	4	1	5	20.0
OIOS	1				1		3	1	5	1	6	16.7
ESCAP	1						9	2	10	2	12	16.7
DESIPA	1				2		10	2	13	2	15	13.3
ECA	1						6	1	7	1	8	12.5
ESCWA	1					1	6		7	1	8	12.5
UNOG	1				2		7	1	10	1	11	9.1
DPKO			1		3		8	1	12	1	13	7.7
UNCTAD	1				3	1	21	1	25	2	27	7.4
OLA	1				3		7		11	0	11	0.0
DHA	1				5		5		11	0	11	0.0
IDCP	1				2		1		4	0	4	0.0
OPPBA			1		4		5		10	0	10	0.0
UNHCR	1		1				2		4	0	4	0.0

Department/ office	USG		ASG		D-2		D-1		Total		Grand total	% of women
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
UNCC					2		1		3	0	3	0.0
DPKO/FALD			3		2		7		12	0	12	0.0
INTORG									0	0	0	
UNON									0	0	0	
UNSCOM									0	0	0	
Total	19	1	13	1	57	14	171	43	260	59	319	18.5

Table 3. Personnel actions, by case subject, level (D-1 to P-1/2) and gender, for the period 1 January 1996 to 31 December 1996

Action	F	M	Total	% women
Recruitment	16	14	30	53.33
Promotion	56	54	110	50.90
Transfer	7	9	16	43.75
Assignment	0	2	2	0
Placement	0	2	2	0

Table 4. Recruitment and promotion, by gender at the D-2 level, for the period 1 January 1996 to 31 December 1996

	D-2			
Action	F	M	Total	% women
Recruitment	4	2	6	66.6
Promotion	1	4	5	20.0

II. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

A. Strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000)

10. The primary goal of the Secretary-General continues to be achievement of the overall target of 50/50 gender balance in professional posts subject to geographical distribution by the year 2000. By June 1996, the Secretariat had met its target of placing women in 35 per cent of the posts subject to geographical distribution.

11. The Organization, however, still needs to address a number of long-standing obstacles to the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat if it is to meet the 50/50 target. It needs to continue to develop a management environment and culture that is supportive of having staff members contribute to their maximum potential, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report (A/51/304).

12. As part of the effort to create a gender-sensitive environment, attention must be paid to realities which affect both sexes in relation to family, work and life issues, including child-care and elder-care. Downsizing and current economic uncertainty are making it more difficult for employees to take advantage of flexible work arrangements and family-friendly policies. Balancing work and family will become more of an issue as demands in both domains increase.

13. OHRM's Work/Life Task Force is currently examining the development of different policies, priorities and programmes, including, for instance, an employee assistance programme to help staff cope with work and non-work issues.

14. A secure and gender-balanced work environment requires specific measures of accountability and responsibility to ensure effective management of human and other resources entrusted to managers' care. The Performance Appraisal System has been an important initiative in that regard. The system includes gender sensitivity as a mandatory performance dimension to be taken into account in the appraisal of all staff members having supervisory and managerial responsibilities. It is, of course, too early to assess its impact, since the first performance cycle is only now ending.

15. The Office of Human Resources Management, under the mandate of the JAC Task Force on Harassment, including Sexual Harassment, in the United Nations Work Place has prepared a questionnaire on harassment, including sexual harassment, in the work place. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund (UNDP/UNFPA), and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) released the questionnaire in late 1996. The global Secretariat, including peacekeeping and other field missions have joined forces with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to circulate the questionnaire in March 1997. The objective of the questionnaire is to gauge staff perceptions and understandings, to be used in future development of policies, complaint procedures and training programmes. It is expected that the

analyses of questionnaire data, together with recommendations for appropriate action, will be presented by the summer of 1997.

B. Issuance and review of the special measures for the achievement of gender equality

16. More than a year has now passed since the special measures for the achievement of gender equality were issued in a consolidated form (ST/AI/412, 5 January 1996). The Secretary-General intends to hold managers of departments accountable for compliance with the measures within departments and offices.

17. Compliance with the special measures has been closely monitored by the Steering Committee on the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat, the Focal Point for Women in the Secretariat, and, to the extent possible, by the appointment and promotion bodies. Some problems have arisen in the application of some of the provisions, in particular those pertaining to the eligibility to apply for internal vacancy announcements at the P-2 and P-3 levels and those pertaining to external recruitment of women in the light of the current recruitment freeze. Based upon observations received, a decision has been made to review the measures so as to resolve those and any other problems encountered in the application of the text.

18. The Secretariat continues to face obstacles in appointing or promoting women, particularly to positions at higher levels. Downsizing the Secretariat, including the freezing of posts and external hiring over the past two years, has undermined the use of recruitment as an enhancement device. Moreover, appointments at the Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General levels have not kept apace with modest gender-balance improvements at the lower levels of intake. Further, staffing capacity to identify qualified senior women candidates has been lacking. However, efforts are now in train to systematize search capability.

19. The Administrative Tribunal has provided guidance to the Secretariat in the application of special measures for the achievement of gender equality. While, as indicated in Judgement No. 671, Grinblat (1995), qualified male candidates cannot be excluded from consideration to available vacancies, Judgement No. 765, Anderson Bieler (1996), reaffirmed that, unless affirmative action measures were taken towards ameliorating the effects of past history, those effects would be perpetuated for many years. This would be incompatible with Article 8 of the Charter, which provides for equal opportunity in United Nations employment. The Tribunal also reaffirmed the legitimacy of affirmative action measures establishing a right to preferential treatment for women whose qualifications are substantially equal to the qualifications of competing male candidates. Those judgements have helped OHRM obtain better compliance with the special measures.

C. Information-sharing

20. The Focal Point for Women in the Secretariat published for the first time, in September 1996, a newsletter called NETWORK which is now issued quarterly and

distributed system-wide, both in printed form and via electronic mail in the United Nations. The newsletter provides a forum for discussion for women and men on issues of gender and communicates the latest news, regulations, statistics, post availability, and other developments to staff of the global Secretariat. The second issue was published in January 1997.

21. The first session of the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (22-23 October 1996) discussed issues of gender balance throughout the secretariats of the United Nations system. It was agreed that the main responsibility for personnel-related issues rested with the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) and the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). The Inter-Agency Committee will, however, support the work of those bodies in order to highlight the importance it attaches to these issues and to stress the link between the institutional dimension and the policy and programme dimensions of gender mainstreaming.

D. Staff development and training

22. Since training is a critical factor in promoting attitudinal change, gender issues are increasingly incorporated into the Secretariat's programmes of training and staff development, including the orientation programme for new staff joining the Secretariat; training in the Performance Appraisal System; training in collaborative negotiation skills and conflict resolution; and supervision and management training.

23. A mandatory programme of people management training is being implemented top-down. Over 90 per cent of all staff at the D-2 and D-1 levels have now participated in the programme, which has now begun for middle-level managers at the P-5 and P-4 levels. In order to improve the gender balance and support measures to enhance the status of women in the Secretariat, women at the P-5 level who have managerial responsibilities were included with the directors in the first phase of the training. Gender issues are dealt with in these programmes and in the follow-up sessions through the use of case-studies that raise gender issues and encourage their discussion. In addition, programmes to promote gender sensitivity in the work place are being developed. These programmes should also contribute to raising awareness of the need to reflect a gender perspective in all areas of the Organization's work.

24. Efforts are also being made to ensure that women in the General Service category have access to a range of developmental opportunities. Most of the organization's programmes of staff development and training are available to both Professional and General Service staff. These include programmes in information technology, language and communications, collaborative negotiation skills, and United Nations administration. A new programme of supervisory skills training for senior General Service and junior professional staff with supervisory responsibilities was introduced this year. Over 50 per cent of the participants in these programmes, as well as in programmes for external studies, are women.

25. In February 1997, a week-long enhanced orientation programme was launched for successful candidates from the G-to-P examination, over 50 per cent of whom

have consistently been women. The programme is seen as an important building block of more systematic efforts to provide development opportunities to staff at all levels.

26. At the same time, it is recognized that, in addition to formal training opportunities, it would be beneficial to have more lateral and interdepartmental transfers and assignments of senior General Service women to mission replacement posts, in order to give them on-the-job training in positions of greater responsibility.

CONCLUSION

27. The Charter of the United Nations was the first universally accepted international agreement to proclaim the equal rights of men and women. As the Commission on the Status of Women commemorates its fiftieth anniversary, it can point to the Organization's extensive record of creating a historical legacy of standards and norms and of international strategies, programmes and goals to advance the status of women worldwide. Gender mainstreaming in such substantive areas as economic and social matters, peace and security, human rights, sustainable development and humanitarian affairs requires an institutional culture that is conducive to such mainstreaming. Consequently, the status of women in the Secretariat is an essential indicator for mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes. While Governments have this responsibility at the national level, the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations system, with the support of Member States, must be committed to assuming a leadership role in the achievement of gender balance and of a gender-sensitive work environment.

Notes

[1] See A/49/587 and Corr.1 and A/50/691.

[2] See Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (A/CONF.177/20), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.